

IN THE CLAIMS:

Amend the claims whereby the claims are as follows:

1.(Currently Amended) A ~~molding~~ method of molding a microlens array whereby the microlens array 30 is molded by heating and compressing a glass element 3 between oppositely placed first and second cores 1, 2 each having a compression molding surface, comprising the steps of:

~~forming a depression or projection part 10A on the compression molding surface 10 of at least one of the cores 1 for transferring and molding a plurality of convex or concave lens elements 31;~~

setting a glass element 3 between the compression molding surfaces 10, 11 of the first and second cores 1, 2, wherein depressions or projections are formed on at least one of the surfaces for transferring and molding a plurality of convex or concave lens elements; thereafter

compressing the glass element 3 between the compression molding surfaces 10, 11 of the first and second cores 1, 2 while providing restriction means 4 for preventing the glass element 3 from escaping in the a direction perpendicular to the a compression direction of the glass element 3; and

with the restriction means in place, compression molding the glass element ~~with the restriction means 4~~ and between the compression molding surfaces 10, 11 of the first and second cores 1, 2.

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2.(Currently Amended) The molding method of ~~a microlens array~~ according to claim 1, wherein the compression molding of the glass element 3 is conducted in vacuum.

3.(Currently Amended) ~~A molding apparatus of~~ Apparatus for molding a microlens array, whereby a microlens array 30 is molded by heating and compressing a glass element 3 ~~between~~ , comprising

oppositely placed first and second cores 1, 2, each having a compression molding surfaces between which surfaces a microlens array is moldable by heating and compression; wherein

a depression or projection part 10A is formed on a the compression molding surface 10 of at least one of the first and second cores 1, 2 for transferring and molding a plurality of convex or concave lens elements 31;

a middle plate having a hole 4A at its center is provided; and

the hole being adapted to have the glass element 3 is set therein in the hole 4A of a middle plate 4, and at least one of the cores having a tip part 1A including the compression molding surface 10 of said at least one of the cores 1 is of said core, the tip being disposed so as to be able to ascend or descend in the hole 4A of the middle plate 4; and

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whereby the apparatus is adapted to compression mold the glass element ~~3 is compression molded~~ by means of said compression molding surfaces ~~10, 11~~ of the cores ~~1, 2~~ and the inner peripheral surface of the hole ~~4A~~ of the middle plate 4 by moving said compression molding surfaces ~~10, 11~~ of both cores ~~1, 2~~ in a relatively closing direction.

4.(Currently Amended) The molding apparatus ~~of a microlens array~~ according to claim 3, wherein further comprising means for maintaining a vacuum state is ~~maintained~~ during the compression molding of the glass element 3.